World Food Day

16 October

WORLD FOOD DAY

Food and Nutrition

Globally, there is enough food for all. Yet more than 780 million people are chronically undernourished. Poverty is the main cause. Millions of people in the developing world simply cannot obtain the food they need for a healthy, productive life.

Malnutrition in some form exists in every country, whether rich or poor. A fifth or more of people in developing countries don't get enough to eat. Many more don't get the right variety of foods and suffer from dietary deficiencies.

For those who are affected by malnutrition, whatever its cause, the consequences are grave enough, but the loss of human potential translates into social and economic costs that no nation can afford.

In selecting *Food and Nutrition* as the theme of World Food Day 1992, FAO reaffirms the first priority set out when the organization was founded on this same day 47 years ago – "raising levels of nutrition and standards of living" as a step toward "ensuring humanity's freedom from hunger."

Food security – Ecuador. Food security means having access at all times to the food needed for a healthy, productive life. For as many as 1 000 million people living in poverty, this basic security does not exist. Measures to achieve food security include ensuring food availability, stabilizing prices, and increasing employment, incomes and food production.

Healthy diet – Tanzania. In many cases the quality and variety of food are at issue rather than the quantity. Deficiencies of vitamins, minerals and other micronutrients seriously impair health. Contamination can lead to food poisoning and the spread of infectious disease. Overnutrition – an excessive or unbalanced diet – contributes to obesity, heart disease, diabetes and some cancers.

Malnutrition – Bangladesh. Social upheaval, war and natural disasters disrupt food supplies. Land degradation impoverishes the resource base. But poverty is undoubtedly the biggest threat to food security.

Micronutrient deficiencies – Lesotho. A healthy diet must include vitamins and minerals that the body needs to grow and function. At least 500 000 children go partially or totally blind each year because of Vitamin A deficiency; two-thirds of them die within a few months of losing their sight.

Home gardens – Mali. The first step in combating micronutrient deficiencies is ensuring people have access to an adequate diet. Home gardens can provide a regular source of micronutrient-rich foods.

Nutrition education – Panama. Teaching people to eat foods rich in micronutrients is the safest, most sustainable way of controlling and preventing most deficiencies. Such foods are available in many communities, but are often neglected by those who need them most – children and pregnant and nursing women.

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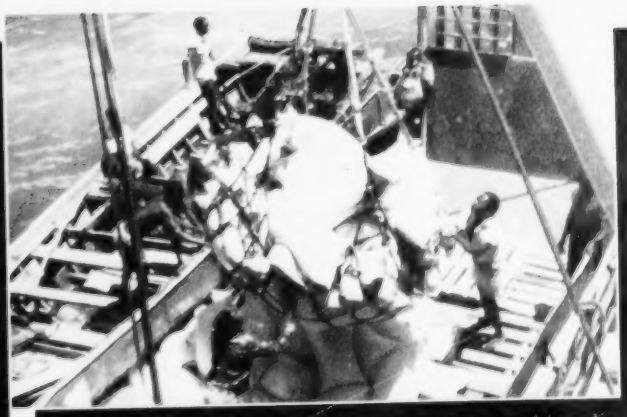
Land degradation – Kenya. When people are hungry, the environment also suffers. One-third of the land in Africa is threatened with desertification because of land mismanagement, particularly overgrazing. The farmers and pastoralists are merely striving to feed their families. If they are to adopt sustainable methods of food production, they need access to the right tools, technology and resources.

Integrated development – Keita, Niger. A farmer shows examples of a successful millet crop grown on rehabilitated soil, in a region where drought and overgrazing had left terrain resembling a moonscape. Integrated development projects aim to reduce the food deficit while halting land degradation.

Nutrition monitoring – satellite image. FAO monitors weather, harvests, food supplies, market prices, land degradation and other factors that affect food security.

Produce market – Egypt. Local markets provide farmers with outlets for their produce and consumers with access to fresh, nutritious food. FAO works to strengthen marketing, storage and distribution facilities.



Food trade – Mozambique. Inequity in world trade hampers the ability of poor nations and households to meet their basic needs. The purchasing power of agricultural exports has declined sharply in recent years, damaging both national economies and household food security.

Street foods – Indonesia. Ready-to-eat foods sold by street vendors have become an essential part of the diets of millions of people living in cities. Ensuring the quality and nutritional value of street foods is of primary importance to FAO. Improving street foods means making sure that those who prepare meals understand good food handling practices and have access to safe water and adequate garbage disposal facilities.

Food control – Thailand. Food standards and inspections protect consumers against health risks and fraud and promote the free movement of food in international trade. The Codex Alimentarius Commission, jointly run by FAO and WHO, establishes international quality and safety standards.

Food safety – Panama. The sign reads, "Avoid cholera. Wash your hands." Education in the hygienic handling and processing of food is as relevant in the home as it is in the food industry. Simple precautions can do much to keep food safe in homes, small shops and eating places. Poor street food hygiene is thought to have been one of the main factors in the recent cholera epidemic in Latin America.

Photos available on request:

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